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Human resources management reform: recruitment and staffing

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 61/244 of 22 December 2006, in which the Secretary-General was requested to report at the second part of its resumed sixty-first session on matters pertaining to recruitment and staffing, including the development of an induction and training programme for the members of central review bodies, the efforts made to reduce the period required to fill vacancies, and the use of pre-screened rosters.

The present report provides an overview of progress made to date and next steps planned regarding the development and implementation of an induction and training programme for the members of the central review bodies, continuing efforts being undertaken to reduce the period required to fill vacancies, and further elaboration of the proposals for the use of pre-screened rosters for recruitment.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 61/244 of 22 December 2006, in which the Secretary-General was requested to report on matters concerning recruitment and staffing at the second part of its resumed sixty-first session.

2. In section II, paragraph 4 of the resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure the proper functioning and membership of the central review bodies in order to ensure their effective role in the staff selection system and, to that end, to develop an induction and training programme for the members. The present report provides an overview of action taken to date and next steps planned in the development of an induction and training programme for the members of the central review bodies.

3. In section II, paragraph 13, of resolution 61/244, the General Assembly reiterated its request to the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to reduce the period required to fill vacancies by addressing the factors contributing to the delays in the process of selection, recruitment and placement and to report to the General Assembly thereon at its sixty-first session. The present report provides an overview of progress made and next steps planned in reducing the period required to fill vacancies.

4. In his report on "Investing in people" (A/61/255), the Secretary-General proposed that rosters be used as the primary instrument for recruitment, placement and promotion for vacancies throughout the Secretariat, including in the field. The General Assembly, in section II, paragraph 10, of resolution 61/244 requested the Secretary-General to promote the full utilization of existing rosters for recruitment and to further elaborate the use of pre-screened rosters, based on the organizational needs identified through strategic workforce planning, taking into account the need for transparency, support for the provision of Article 101 of the Charter and administrative and resource implications, as well as geographical and gender mandates, and to report to it thereon at the second part of its resumed sixty-first session. The present report further elaborates proposals for the use of pre-screened rosters for recruitment.

II. Development of an induction and training programme for members of the central review bodies

A. Central review bodies

5. Central review bodies are joint staff-management bodies established by ST/SGB/2002/6 under staff rule 104.14. Their role is to approve evaluation criteria, and to review proposals for filling vacancies made by the department or office concerned in order to ensure that candidates are evaluated on the basis of the pre-approved evaluation criteria and/or that the applicable procedures were followed.

6. The central review bodies are established on a two-year term basis at all major duty stations: New York, Geneva, Vienna, Nairobi, Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Beirut and Santiago. There are also central review bodies at The Hague, Port of Spain,

Mexico City and Arusha. The Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2002/6 provides that half of the membership of each central review body should be selected by the Secretary-General and the other half by the staff representative body at the duty station concerned.

7. Three types of central review body have been established. The Central Review Boards, established in New York, Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna, review cases at the P-5 and D-1 levels. The Board in New York reviews cases at those levels from New York as well as Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Beirut and Santiago. The Central Review Committees review cases at the P-3 and P-4 levels and the Central Review Panels are responsible for cases in the General Service and related categories at the G-5 to G-7, TC-4 to TC-8 and S-3 to S-7 levels in their respective duty stations. Each central review body meets on a weekly basis, or as needed, to review submissions of evaluation criteria and recommendations for the filling of a vacancy. In the 2004-2005 biennium, central review bodies at all major duty stations conducted a total of over 1,300 meetings and endorsed recommendations for filling over 2,100 vacancies.

8. United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions have high-volume, dynamic recruitment requirements. In 2006, 2,776 staff selections were made. Peacekeeping operations and special political missions will benefit from the establishment of a dedicated central review body mechanism. The review bodies will ensure that the circulation of vacancy announcements is in line with organizational, procedural and job classification standards, and that the approved evaluation criteria are accurately and consistently applied in the evaluation of candidates for placement on the roster for service in United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions.

B. Current situation

9. New central review body members at all duty stations receive a basic orientation and induction training conducted by the Office of Human Resources Management or the human resources office at the duty station. The orientation sessions include a hands-on training module on the Galaxy e-staffing tool and an introduction to the relevant staff selection policies.

10. The Office of Human Resources Management has taken a number of steps to ensure the continuous improvement of the work of central review bodies in 2006. In order to ensure their familiarity with the Galaxy e-staffing tool and understanding of relevant rules and procedures, half-day orientation and training sessions continued to be delivered to all new central review body members at all duty stations. A briefing module on the role of the central review bodies has been developed by the Office of Human Resources Management and distributed to all offices away from Headquarters for the training of the members of local central review bodies. All offices reported using that presentation, along with locally developed materials, in their orientation and training sessions.

11. In accordance with staff rule 104.14, each central review body may establish its own rules of procedure. The rules of procedure for central review bodies in all duty stations have been reviewed by the Office of Human Resources Management for standardization and consistency and submitted to central review bodies at all offices away from Headquarters for their consideration and decision.

12. An information session for programme managers has been developed by the Office of Human Resources Management and made available to offices away from Headquarters for local delivery. Those sessions, which have been offered at Headquarters on a monthly basis, have reached more than 300 programme managers. Offices away from Headquarters use the materials to organize similar information sessions locally. The sessions cover the policies, guidelines and best practices in the creation of vacancy announcements and evaluation criteria, the evaluation of candidates and the presentation of recommendations to the central review bodies.

13. In March 2007, an electronic online questionnaire was developed and distributed to all members of the central review bodies in all duty stations. The questionnaire seeks to elicit feedback on training provided and to assess further training needs of members. That tool will assist the Office of Human Resources Management in identifying and responding to the needs and concerns of members of central review bodies.

C. Next steps

14. The Office of Human Resources Management, in cooperation with human resources offices throughout the Secretariat, will continue to make improvements to the orientation and training programme for members of central review bodies. In order to ensure greater consistency in central review body reviews, a new version of the *Guidelines for Central Review Bodies Review in the Staff Selection System* is being developed and introduced as part of the training programme. The guidelines, together with other manuals and tools such as case studies, will be made available electronically to other duty stations through the website of the Office of Human Resources Management. Enhanced orientation and training programmes will be offered to the members of central review bodies at all duty stations in 2007.

15. The Office of Human Resources Management will continue to play a proactive role in monitoring the training activities and needs of members of the central review bodies and will ensure that follow-up training sessions are offered throughout the Secretariat.

III. Efforts to reduce the period required to fill vacancies

A. Background

16. In response to General Assembly resolution 59/266 of 15 March 2005, the Secretariat reviewed the staff selection system in 2006 and presented its findings to the General Assembly in the Secretary-General's reports on human resources management reform (A/61/228 and Corr.1, paras. 60-91) and "Investing in people" (A/61/255, paras. 67-91). The review took into account recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, feedback on the Secretary-General's reform proposals received through outreach activities, internal reviews conducted by the Office of Human Resources Management, views of staff members who perform different roles in the staff selection system, as well as a benchmarking exercise carried out involving 22 United Nations funds and programmes, agencies, development banks and intergovernmental organizations.

17. The Staff Management Coordination Committee, the highest level of formal consultation between the staff and the management of the United Nations, discussed at its twenty-seventh session in June 2006 (SMCC-XXVII) the Secretary-General's human resources management reform proposals. The Committee expressed support for the Secretary-General's human resources management proposals and made a number of recommendations with respect to the details of the proposals, which were accepted by the Secretary-General and incorporated in the reform proposals. The Committee's proposals on the current policies on recruitment and staffing were incorporated in the revised staff selection system and promulgated in administrative instruction ST/AI/2006/3.

18. Feedback from multiple sources, as indicated above, reveals that factors influencing the duration of the process of filling vacancies include: (a) complexity of the policies, including the eligibility requirements governing the system; (b) the large number of applications, which places an added burden on programme managers and administrators; (c) the e-staffing support tool, which does not handle effectively the large volume of applications, and is not found to be sufficiently user-friendly; (d) lack of familiarity of programme managers with the policies, procedures and electronic tool; and (e) background checks and administrative clearances of candidates, which are conducted after the selection decision is made.

B. Progress to date

19. As noted in the Secretary-General's report (A/61/228 and Corr.1), the staff selection system, supported by its Galaxy e-staffing tool, significantly reduced the average number of days to fill vacancies from 275 days under the previous system to 174 days. The Secretary-General recognizes that more progress needs to be made. The following paragraphs outline the current progress in addressing several of the factors identified above.

1. Simplification of policies and procedures

20. Generic job profiles are increasingly being used as the basis for vacancy announcements. Evaluation criteria are also being revised to standardize the competency and qualification requirements. Those efforts are expected to reduce the time spent by managers on those critical steps of the selection process and decrease the rate of cases being returned from the central review bodies to the managers, thereby further reducing the average number of days to fill vacancies. That will also contribute to greater transparency and consistency.

21. Vacancy announcements are published in both English and French, the two working languages of the Secretariat. The number of vacancy announcements has increased over the years, resulting in increased requirements for translation. To address this issue, the Office of Human Resources Management proposes to leverage the use of information technology and to streamline the process by using generic vacancy announcements, which would be available online. Since the generic vacancy announcements would be available in both working languages, the time spent on the translation process is expected to be reduced.

22. A review of business processes is currently being undertaken in preparation for the introduction of a new e-staffing tool and the new enterprise resource planning

(ERP) system. The review will result in the simplification and streamlining of policies and processes used to fill vacancies.

2. Enhancement of information technology support tool

23. While the introduction of the Galaxy e-staffing tool broadened access to United Nations vacancies and increased the transparency of recruitment processes, its technological infrastructure limits its flexibility and does not allow for modifications that are required to accommodate dynamic and changing operational needs. As the volume of applications has increased, system performance and speed of access has decreased, especially for offices away from Headquarters. Concerns have also been expressed about Galaxy's ease of use, accessibility, efficiency and integration with other systems.

24. The current technology supporting the Galaxy e-staffing system does not allow for management of rosters or for a speedy matching and evaluation of candidates against vacancy announcements.

25. As approved by the General Assembly in section XIII, paragraph 2, of its resolution 61/244, the Secretariat is currently strengthening its human resources information technology systems, including replacement of Galaxy with a new e-staffing tool with the flexibility to meet the Organization's changing needs. The Secretariat is committed to address those issues that contribute to the delays in the filling of vacancies.

3. Training of central review bodies and programme managers

26. With a view to speeding up the process, the Office of Human Resources Management has been conducting training on the preparation of vacancy announcements, evaluation criteria and the evaluation of candidates tailored to meet the needs of programme managers and the members of central review bodies. In addition, all interview panel members are now required to complete training in competency-based interviewing.

C. Next steps

27. Since the introduction of the staff selection system in 2002, there has been a significant improvement in reducing the delays in filling vacancies. The obstacles identified in the recent review of the system are being actively addressed as described in the above paragraphs.

28. In his report "Investing in people", the Secretary-General proposed a strategy for the development of a more proactive, targeted and speedy recruitment system, as part of the new human resources framework. In accordance with that strategy, subject to availability of resources, it is envisaged that proactive and targeted recruitment campaigns will be undertaken to provide information about employment opportunities with the United Nations and to invite applications from prospective candidates. Such outreach efforts would be based on strategic and systematic workforce planning, including analysis of supply and demand requirements, proposing solutions to address gaps, while ensuring coordination with the human resources action plans within each department.

29. The introduction of workforce planning and the use of pre-screened rosters as the primary instrument for recruitment and placement, would further contribute to reducing the recruitment time by redesigning and streamlining the existing work processes, bringing upstream many time-consuming steps of the recruitment process.

30. In order to further speed up the selection process, training and guidance to staff members who play key roles in the staff selection system will continue to be provided. In addition, the new e-staffing tool will contain improved functions to reduce processing time.

31. It is expected that the ongoing efforts and measures presented in the present report will result in improved timeliness in the filling of vacancies to meet the Organization's staffing needs. Further progress, however, would be subject to the introduction of pre-screened rosters described below.

IV. Use of rosters

32. The present section addresses the General Assembly request that the Secretary-General promote the full utilization of existing rosters for recruitment and the progress made to date in enhancing the use of existing rosters.

A. Promoting the full utilization of existing rosters for recruitment

33. Currently, there are a number of different rosters, including: (a) rosters created under the staff selection system; (b) rosters of candidates cleared for selection for posts in peacekeeping operations maintained by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations; and (c) rosters of candidates for entry-level posts in the Professional category who have been successful in the national competitive recruitment examination, the examination for movement from the General Service and related categories to the Professional category, and the examinations for language posts (maintained by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management).

34. As mandated by the General Assembly, currently, all vacancies for posts under the 100 series of the staff rules subject to the staff selection system are advertised. Individual vacancy announcements are issued as and when vacancies arise. Following the review process, candidates who are recommended for a vacancy but not selected are placed on a roster for one year starting from the first of the month after the selection decision. Within the one-year period, they may be selected for subsequent vacancies that are similar to the vacancy to which they originally applied. In order to promote gender balance, female candidates rostered as of 1 January 2007 will remain on the roster for three years.

35. Roster candidates may be selected without reverting to a central review body. All departments and offices have been encouraged to fully utilize the roster in making selections, as that broadens the pool of available candidates, expedites the process and encourages consistency in the review of candidates. The current e-staffing tool cannot fully support the selection of candidates from the roster. The introduction of a new e-staffing tool will address that problem.

36. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations makes extensive use of rosters to fill vacancies in United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions. Vacancy announcements are formulated on the basis of either a classified job description or an approved generic job profile. As a rule, generic, open-ended vacancy announcements are posted to fill existing and projected needs in the field. Candidates are able to view on the Galaxy website the location and type of current vacancies, and to indicate the positions and missions of interest to them. Post-specific vacancies are issued in cases where the position is highly specialized and cannot be filled in the first instance through the existing rosters.

37. Applicants to both generic and post-specific vacancy announcements are screened against primary eligibility criteria; i.e., education, experience, defined competency and language skill requirements. The first-level screening is conducted at Headquarters by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations Personnel Management and Support Service, which includes eligible candidates on the roster. Field mission Personnel Sections, which have electronic access to the rosters, compile a short list of candidates for a specific mission vacancy. A second level, technical screening process is then conducted by a subject-matter expert in the mission for posts up to the P-4 level, or at Headquarters, if such an expert is not available in the mission or if the post is above the P-4 level. With the assistance of the Personnel Section, the field mission programme manager conducts a competency-based interview and comparative evaluation of the short list of candidates. The selection is made and documented at the level of the mission. The integrity of the process is certified at both the field and Headquarters level by the Chief Administrative Officer/Director of Administration and the Personnel Management and Support, respectively. Candidates who have been cleared as meeting the eligibility and technical requirements of a post are placed on a roster for one year. If they are not selected for a position during that year, they will be invited to again express their interest by reapplying.

38. For established P-2 posts, selections are made through the roster of successful candidates in the national competitive examination, the examination for movement from the General Service and related categories to the Professional category, and the examinations for language posts. Candidates for entry-level posts in the General Service and related categories are also selected from rosters.

39. Currently, the e-staffing tool is being modified to make the personal history profiles of national competitive examination candidates available online to enable programme managers direct access to the profiles. The roster is updated periodically to ensure that it contains candidates who continue to be available for recruitment. In the training for programme managers, the policies and procedures for recruiting national competitive examination candidates are described and the selection of candidates from the roster is encouraged.

40. To ensure the expeditious filling of P-2 posts subject to geographical distribution, in accordance with resolution 61/244, the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management has the authority to place candidates on such posts that have not been filled after a period of three months.

41. Experience to date shows that the establishment of rosters expedites the recruitment process. The Office of Human Resources Management is taking concrete steps to proactively promote the full utilization of existing rosters, including by briefing senior management and programme managers on the benefits

of utilizing the roster system to expedite the selection process. In addition, the introduction of a new technology platform will further promote the full use of existing rosters for recruitment.

B. Proposal: framework of pre-screened roster system

42. Moving beyond the use of current rosters, the Secretary-General's report on "Investing in people" (A/61/255, paras. 70-75) envisages the use of pre-screened rosters as the primary instrument for filling vacancies throughout the Secretariat, including in the field. The preparations for the establishment of a pre-screened roster system comprise five building blocks, including: (a) strategic workforce planning to identify the Organization's staffing needs; (b) use of generic vacancy announcements; (c) creation of expert groups; (d) expanded use of central review bodies throughout the Secretariat; and (e) upstreamed clearance process.

43. The roster of pre-screened candidates would include those who have either succeeded in a competitive examination or been reviewed and found suitable by the process described below. Programme managers will then be able to select from the appropriate pool of candidates identified as suitable for a particular type of vacancy. That process, coupled with the upstream work, will significantly simplify and speed up the selection of candidates, and allow them to take up their functions more quickly.

1. Strategic workforce planning

44. As an integral part of strategic workforce planning, identification of the Organization's staffing needs, including in field missions, would regularly be undertaken. Strategic workforce planning takes into account new mandates, retirements, skill gaps, new posts, upcoming post occupancy limits, and the geography and gender profile of the Organization. Based on the findings of the planning exercises, generic vacancy announcements would be issued for different occupational groups. In that context, proactive outreach would be conducted to bring in range Member States that are unrepresented and underrepresented and those that might fall below their desirable ranges.

45. Strategic workforce planning for United Nations peace operations would continue to be carried out by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, in consultation with the Office of Human Resources Management. As described in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Reforming the Field Service category: investing in meeting the human resources requirements of United Nations peace operations in the twenty-first century" (A/61/255/Add.1 and Corr.1), the Department of Peacekeeping Operations conducted an in-depth assessment of the medium-term staffing needs for peace operations. On the basis of its analysis, the Department identified a baseline requirement for 2,500 civilian career peacekeepers to perform substantive and support functions at both the Professional and Field Service levels to meet the minimum peacekeeping staffing requirements in the medium term. The numbers, levels and functions of the positions identified as the baseline requirement would be kept under review and updated to reflect the evolving nature and needs of peacekeeping.

46. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations would also develop appropriate planning for staffing requirements over and above 2,500, including rapid

recruitment mechanisms for temporary surge personnel and a flexible staffing strategy that would respond to the needs of missions at various stages, for example, the gradual replacement of international staff with national staff and the use of United Nations Volunteers at the start-up of a mission to help train local staff, thereby building skills needed by the mission as well as contributing to building national capacity. In coordination with the Office of Human Resources Management, outreach efforts will focus on identifying candidates for hard-to-fill occupational groups, on identifying qualified and available female candidates to the field and on securing a broad geographical representation in United Nations peacekeeping and political missions.

2. Generic vacancy announcements

47. Currently, generic job profiles are already being used in the creation of most vacancy announcements. It is proposed that generic vacancy announcements, derived from generic job profiles, be used for most positions in the Secretariat. The generic vacancy announcements would be used at all duty stations, including the field, for posts in the same occupational groups and levels.

48. The generic vacancy announcements would reflect the needs of departments and offices and contain the key elements of generic job profiles such as responsibilities, competencies, qualifications including education, experience, language and other skills. Generic vacancy announcements will provide the details necessary to attract the right profile of candidates, including, where possible, an indication of the department or duty station where the post may be available. In cases where posts are highly specialized and managers were unable to identify a suitable candidate from a roster, specific vacancy announcements would be issued. The procedures for selecting a candidate after advertising for a specific post would remain as under the current system, including the review of evaluation criteria and the process by a joint body.

49. Based on anticipated needs, generic vacancy announcements would be posted as often as necessary. The period of circulation of generic vacancy announcements would be 60 days. To meet the high-volume and complex staffing requirements of United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions, rosters will normally have to be continually replenished through the circulation of open-ended vacancy announcements.

50. The personal history forms will be redesigned to enable the electronic screening of applicants against the requirements specified in a vacancy announcement.

3. Expert groups

51. Expert groups, comprised of staff members with substantive knowledge and experience in a particular occupational group, would be established to conduct the substantive screening of candidates. They would conduct competency-based interviews of those candidates assessed to have met the requirements and make recommendations to the central review bodies for placement on the roster. Departments, offices and/or field missions would nominate their staff to participate in the work of expert groups as appropriate and necessary.

4. Central review bodies

52. The central review bodies would continue to ensure that the process was properly followed prior to the placement of candidates on the roster. That would include the initial approval of the generic vacancy announcements and the applicable evaluation criteria. The central review bodies would also ascertain that recommendations for placement on the roster are reasoned and objectively justifiable based on the pre-approved evaluation criteria and there is no mistake of fact, law or procedure, prejudice or improper motive that could have prevented a full and fair consideration of the requisite qualifications and experience of the candidates. In cases of specific vacancy announcements, the central review bodies would perform the same role as in the current system.

53. The use of central review bodies would be expanded, taking into account the operational needs of the various departments and offices, including peacekeeping and special political missions. That would ensure standardization and consistency in the rostering and selection of staff throughout the Secretariat.

5. Placement on the roster

54. Following endorsement by a central review body, candidates would be administratively cleared before being placed on a roster. Such clearance would include checking of references, educational background, employment history and internal clearances to perform administrative functions, if required. Currently, administrative clearance is done only after a candidate is selected, which contributes to delays in bringing a candidate on board. Conducting that procedure in advance would speed up and simplify bringing candidates on board.

6. Selection from the roster

55. When a vacancy arises, the head of department or office would be able to select from the roster of candidates who have been assessed to be qualified for the relevant occupational group at the level of the vacancy. Selection of a staff member for a higher-level post would result in either a lateral move or a promotion, while selection of an external candidate would result in recruitment action. In accordance with staff regulation 4.4, in making a selection, full consideration would have to be given to the qualifications and experience of serving staff members. In selecting a candidate for a particular vacancy, the head of department, office or field mission would have to take into account the targets in the human resources action plan in order to ensure compliance with the mandates of the General Assembly.

7. Roster management

56. The roster of pre-screened candidates would be actively managed in order to ensure that candidates continue to be available and interested, and that their information is kept up to date. Candidates would remain on the roster for a limited period. The rosters would be replenished periodically to ensure that staff members as well as external candidates have regular opportunities to be considered for vacancies. The size of the roster would be monitored to ensure that it meets the anticipated needs as well as unforeseen demands but does not result in an excess number of candidates.

8. Ensuring that Article 101 of the Charter is observed

57. The Charter, in Article 101, paragraph 3, states: "The paramount consideration in the employment of the staff and in the determination of the conditions of service shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity. Due regard shall be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible."

58. The proposed system contains mechanisms which would ensure that the best qualified candidates, both external and internal, are placed on the roster. Those mechanisms include the use of expert groups and central review bodies. The Office of Human Resources Management would actively manage the roster of candidates for positions throughout the global Secretariat. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations would continue to exercise delegated authority to develop and manage additional rosters of candidates to meet the specific requirements of the United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions. Heads of department and office would retain delegated authority for recruitment and placement and, together with their programme managers, remain responsible for ensuring that the vacant posts are filled in a timely manner, by the most suitable candidate, and in accordance with the organizational mandates, principles and standards. The existing mechanisms for ensuring geographical distribution and gender balance, set out in ST/AI/2006/3, would remain applicable.

59. To support the career progression of serving staff members, managers are accountable for the development and learning of their staff, for creating an environment conducive to the professional development of their staff, and for ensuring that knowledge is shared and knowledge management systems are in place.

9. Ensuring transparency

60. The use of generic vacancy announcements would ensure that the requirements for positions in different occupational groups and levels are consistent throughout the Organization. For each occupational group and level, candidates would be assessed against the same evaluation criteria by a panel of experts who would have knowledge in substantive areas. That process would be reviewed by central review bodies to further ensure compliance with the applicable procedures.

61. When recommending selection of a candidate to the head of department, programme managers will be required to substantiate the recommendation in writing. Candidates who were interviewed but not selected will be so informed.

62. In cases where delegated authority in the management of human resources has been improperly exercised, the delegation of authority may be limited or withdrawn by the Secretary-General.

10. Ensuring compliance with geography and gender mandates

63. In the context of workforce planning, the Office of Human Resources Management identifies the Member States that are unrepresented and underrepresented or might fall below their desirable ranges. It is envisaged that more proactive outreach would be conducted to attract suitable candidates from such Member States. In addition, outreach strategies to expand the pool of qualified women candidates, especially for senior positions and in occupational groups where women are seriously underrepresented, would be undertaken.

64. In the selection of candidates for posts, heads of department or office would be guided by commitments made in their human resources action plans. Heads of department are required to certify that the geography and gender targets as set out in their respective Human Resources Action Plans were taken into account in selection decisions. In cases where department heads, particularly those who are not meeting departmental targets for geography and gender, would intend to select an external candidate from an overrepresented Member State or a male candidate where there is an equally qualified female candidate, that selection needs to be justified to and approved by the Office of Human Resources Management, in accordance with resolution 61/244.

65. Performance of heads of department or office in meeting human resources management objectives is periodically reviewed by the Management Performance Board, chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General, which serves as an instrument of managerial accountability at the highest levels. In this context, compliance with mandates on equitable geographic distribution and gender balance set by the General Assembly are key performance indicators.

66. Although the system of desirable geographical distribution ranges does not apply to the recruitment of staff to United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations ensures that due consideration is given to geographical representation, as required under Article 101.3 of the Charter of the United Nations. Dedicated efforts are also made to secure as high a representation as possible of female staff in the field. Finally, in accordance with the spirit of General Assembly resolution 55/238, staff serving in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations at Headquarters and in the field should properly reflect the contribution of troop-contributing countries to United Nations peacekeeping. The Human Resources Action Plan for the Head of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations will include overall targets and goals for staffing the Department of Peacekeeping Operations both at Headquarters and in the field, in line with these considerations. In keeping with the established reporting lines, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Head of Mission will, in turn, be held accountable to the Secretary-General, through the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for the performance of his/her mission in meeting the Human Resources Action Plan targets and goals set for the specific mission.

C. Anticipated benefits

67. The pre-screened roster system represents an important initiative to strengthen the ability of the Secretariat to deploy qualified candidates in a timely manner. Proactive and strategic recruitment would enhance the ability of the Organization to attract and retain high quality staff who meet organizational needs and standards. It would also help to reduce the high vacancy rates that prevail in certain duty stations and in field operations.

68. The use of pre-screened rosters to fill vacancies would expedite and streamline the staff selection process and enhance transparency, simplicity and flexibility to meet a variety of staffing needs and to avoid the duplication of effort, reduce administrative delays and shorten the time required to fill a vacancy.

69. The implementation of the proposal is linked to the availability of resources, as described in the Secretary-General's report on "Investing in people" and in the budget request for the 2008-2009 biennium.

70. The Assembly is invited to take note of the present report.